

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

INFO AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON

COMNAVTELCOM WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN

COMIDEASTFOR

NAVCOMMUNIT ASMARA

NAVCOMMSTA NEA MAKRI

CNO WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 0945

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SEDU, PINS, ET

SUBJECT: UNIVERSITY OF ASMARA LAUNCHES INTO ITS FIRST REGULAR
SEMESTER

REF: ASMARA 0566 (DTG 191245Z JUL 76)

1. SISTER LUELLA WALL, THE AMCIT PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ASMARA, VISITED THE CONGEN TO INTRODUCE TWO NEWLY-ARRIVED FACULTY MEMBERS, ONE AN AMERICAN AND THE OTHER A CANADIAN. DURING THIS CALL SHE REVIEWED THE CURRENT SITUATION AT THE UNIVERSITY.

2. THE FIRST REGULAR SEMESTER ENROLLMENT IS 392, 102 IN THE DAY SESSION, AND 290 IN THE "NIGHT" SESSION. WITH THE DUSK-TO-DAWN CURFEW, THE "NIGHT" SESSION ACTUALLY ATTENDS CLASSES FROM 0700 TO 0750 AND 1340 TO 1430, WHICH PERMITS WORKING STUDENTS TO ATTEND WITHOUT DISRUPTION TO THEIR JOBS. THIS ENROLLMENT IS HIGHER THAN
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WAS ORIGINALLY ANTICIPATED, YET STILL WELL BELOW THE 600 STUDENTS

ATTENDING PRIOR TO THE CLOSURE IN 1974.

3. THUS FAR, THIS SEMESTER HAS BEEN NOTABLE BY THE LACK OF POLITICAL ACTIVITY AMONG THE STUDENTS, AND THE SINCERE DEVOTION OF THE STUDENTS TO THEIR ACADEMIC PURSUITS. THE FORMER SITUATION IS THE RESULT OF BOTH AN INNATE FEAR OF UNRESTRAINED REPRISALS BY EPMG SECURITY FORCES AGAINST DISSIDENT ERITREAN STUDENTS, AND A STERN AND UNEQUIVOCAL VERBAL AND WRITTEN WARNING FROM SISTER LUELLA THAT ANY STUDENT DISCUSSING POLITICS ON THE UNIVERSITY GROUNDS WILL BE SUMMARILY DISMISSED. THE LATTER SITUATION APPEARS TO STEM FROM A HEIGHTENED APPRECIATION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION AFTER ALMOST TWO YEARS WITHOUT THAT OPTION. FURTHER, MANY OF THE FORMER STUDENT ACTIVISTS ARE THOUGHT NOW TO BE WITH THE INSURGENTS OR REFUGEES IN OTHER COUNTRIES.

4. THE MOST STARTLING ASPECT OF THE UNIVERSITY'S CURRENT OPERATIONS IS THE COMPLETE ABSENCE OF EPMG POLITICAL INTERVENTION. THERE HAVE BEEN NO CHANGES IN CURRICULUM IMPOSED BY THE EPMG ALTHOUGH SOME ADJUSTMENTS IN ECONOMICS COURSE WERE UNDERTAKEN VOLUNTARILY BY THE UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION IN HOPES OF PRECLUDING OFFICIAL ACTION. LIKEWISE, THE ADMINISTRATION HAS VERY DELIBERATELY AVOIDED ASKING THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION TO ASSIST THEM IN EXPANDING THEIR FACULTY, BECAUSE THEY HAD HEARD THAT THERE WERE A NUMBER OF EASTERN EUROPEAN PROFESSORS ENROUTE TO ETHIOPIA. THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY HAS ALSO BEEN SPARED FROM HAVING TO INCORPORATE COMMUNIST LITERATURE IN ITS COLLECTION.

5. COMMENT: SISTER LUELLA AND HER STAFF ARE REALISTIC ENOUGH TO UNDERSTAND THAT SHOULD THE EPMG APPLY PRESSURE IN ANY OF THESE AREAS, THEY WILL HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO ACQUIESCE. THEIR PRINCIPAL DEFENSE TO DATE HAS BEEN THE MAINTENANCE OF A LOW PROFILE AND A STUDIED AVOIDANCE OF CONFRONTATION.
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